

From the first day of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, the new Democratic majority has worked to restore government accountability. The new Congress has adopted [pay as you go](#) budgeting in order to promote fiscal responsibility and significantly reduced the use of “earmarks” in spending bills. This week marks yet another turning point towards a more accountable Washington, as the House passed four pieces of legislation to support this ongoing effort.

[\*\*The Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act\*\*](#) strengthens protections for federal whistleblowers to prevent retaliation against those who report federal waste, fraud, and abuse to authorities. Specifically, the measure gives whistleblower protection to federal workers specializing in national security issues, and improves protection for employees of federal contractors who report on waste fraud and abuses of taxpayers dollars. It also protects employees who report on the federal government manipulating of science.

[\*\*The Presidential Library Donation Reform Act\*\*](#) requires the disclosure of donors who contribute over \$200 to presidential libraries during a president’s term and the for four years after the President’s term ends. (Currently, there are no limits on the amount of these contributions and they are not required to be disclosed.)

[\*\*The Freedom of Information Act Amendments\*\*](#) provides for more timely disclosure of government documents through a variety of reforms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). It restores the presumption of disclosure to FOIA, helps FOIA requesters obtain timely responses, improves transparency in agency compliance with FOIA, provides an alternative to litigation, and provides accountability for FOIA decisions.

[\*\*The Presidential Records Act Amendments\*\*](#) restores public access to former president’s official papers, nullifying a 2001 presidential executive order that gave current and former Presidents (and their heirs) and as well as former vice presidents broad authority to withhold presidential documents or delay their release indefinitely.

These pieces of legislation follow numerous government scandals. Most recent and notable are the firing of eight U.S. Attorney’s under dubious circumstances in December of 2006 and the improper and illegal use of National Security Letters by the Federal Bureau of Intelligence.

While the Department of Justice and FBI have admitted to their [mistakes](#) in handling both these cases, [greater Congressional oversight](#) is certainly needed.

These issues and their remedial legislations are a beginning to our ongoing efforts to restore accountability and trust in Washington. They are part of the mandate from the last election, which brought to office the new Democratic majority. Together, we will continue to build on this work throughout the tenure of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

[What legislative issues do you think deserve the greatest scrutiny?](#)